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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000320

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [LO](#)  
SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA POLITICAL ROUND UP: MAY 30, 2007

REF: A. BRATISLAVA 270

[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 256

[1](#)C. BRATISLAVA 21

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

#### PRESIDENT GASPAROVIC SHARES HIS OPINIONS

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- [1](#)1. (SBU) In a recent conversation with the Ambassador, President Ivan Gasparovic, whose role is largely ceremonial, shared his opinions on a variety of topics.
- [1](#)2. (C) ON MEETING WITH SERBIAN PRESIDENT TADIC: Gasparovic said he explained Slovakia's economic success as a result of joining the EU, and he asked Tadic whether he would prefer to have an economy like Slovakia with Serbia as part of the EU, or Kosovo.
- [1](#)3. (C) Gasparovic does not believe Parliament would recall Foreign Minister Jan Kubis if the Slovaks voted with Europe on Kosovo at the UNSC. He said Slovak National Party (SNS) leader Jan Slota would scream a lot, but would not vote to recall a minister from the governing coalition. He appreciated our offer to include Slovak ideas in the drafting process.
- [1](#)4. (C) HZDS LEADERSHIP CONTEST: Gasparovic thinks Viliam Veteska could beat Vladimir Meciar in a secret ballot for chairmanship of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS), but that is unlikely to happen. (ref A)
- [1](#)5. (C) PRESS FREEDOMS: The President said he had echoed our "engage you fool" advice and urged Prime Minister Robert Fico to speak at a convocation on Press Freedom where the Ambassador appeared but that he had refused. Gasparovic then set off on a tirade about how the press here refuses, even when the Presidential Office informs them by email, to print retractions of mistakes. He was particularly exercised over a SME newspaper story that had him skipping Slovak National Uprising memorial events in Bratislava without mentioning that he had been attending a similar event in Trnava.

#### JUSTICE MINISTRY PROPOSES SHORTER SENTENCES

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- [1](#)6. (U) The Justice Ministry is drafting a proposal to reduce the minimum sentences for numerous serious crimes, including murder (from 20 down to 15 years), rape, sexual abuse, torture, extortion, and robbery, according to news reports. The changes would also cancel the provision that third-time recidivists automatically receive higher sentences. If such changes become law, they would reverse measures enacted by the previous administration which were a highlight of the tenure of former Justice Minister Daniel Lipsic of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH).

#### NGOs DISCUSS POTENTIAL LOSS OF TAX-PAYER FUNDING

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¶17. (SBU) Slovak NGO leaders met at the DCM's residence to discuss strategies to maintain funding for civil society via direct assignation of taxes to the NGO(s) of the tax-payer's choice. Attendees represented a wide array of civic organizations, ranging from international NGOs focused on democratization beyond Slovak borders to small, rural community groups. Several participants had recently met with Ministry of Finance State Secretary (equivalent to Deputy Minister) Peter Kazimir on the subject, who hoped to avoid a repeat of last year's public debate on the issue, and seemed open to making assignation of taxes available to all types of NGOs. Kazimir and other coalition partners were not eager to pick a fight with HZDS, however, which brokered last year's compromise to maintain 2% assignation in exchange for eliminating human rights and environmental groups from funding eligibility. To increase prospects of success on the 2% issue this autumn, all agreed to seek out a wider range of partners to spread the message on the issue, including European embassies and businesses who have developed partnerships with NGOs. We have drafted a letter, to be signed by the U.S. and, we hope, several European ambassadors, to PM Fico urging support for NGOs.

#### PROSECUTOR: RELIGIOUS REGISTRATION LAW IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL

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¶18. (U) Slovakia's General Prosecutor believes that the recently toughened law on registration requirements for religious groups (ref B) is discriminatory. The GP had filed a suit with the Constitutional Court in 2004 against the previous requirements, which was still pending when the new, stricter amendment came into effect on May 1.

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#### NEO-NAZIS MARCH AGAINST EU ACCESSION FOR TURKEY

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¶19. (U) According to news reports, about 30 neo-Nazis marched across old-town Bratislava on May 1 against Turkey joining the European Union. The demonstration, organized by Slovenska Pospolitost, a local far-right extremist group, included speeches against the spread of Islam in Europe.

¶110. (U) A clothing shop called "KKK Anglicka Moda" (KKK English fashion) which sells items affiliated with neo-Nazism, such as the brands Thor Steiner and Eighty-eight, in Banska Bystrica, a large city in central Slovakia, offered an 8.8% discount in mid-May to the city's police officers in addition to Slovenska Pospolitost members. Particular items were offered at 8818 crowns. (Note: The numbers 88 and 18, known neo-Nazi identification symbols, stem from "Heil Hitler" and "Adolf Hitler" based on the letters A and H as the first and eighth letters of the alphabet. End Note.) The police declined. Based on research from a local media outlet, the shop is affiliated with Marian Kotleba, the former head of Pospolitost, and his brother.

#### UPN-USHMM COOPERATE SUCCESSFULLY...

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¶111. (U) The government-funded Institute for National Memory (UPN) continues to research, publish, and preserve documents from Slovakia's two past totalitarian regimes, the fascist WWII-era state and the communist Czechoslovak era, for the time being. A two-week working visit by a historian from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in late April demonstrated the successful on-going cooperation between the two institutions.

#### ...BUT CHANGES ON THE HORIZON MAY LIMIT UPN'S PURPOSE

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¶112. (U) Despite the working-level success the USHMM rep experienced, UPN co-founder Miroslav Lehky is so concerned

that UPN is about to take a different direction that he is leaving the Institute. Citing UPN Chairman Ivan Petrasky's meeting with Rafael Rafaj, an MP from SNS, and Archbishop Jan Sokol, who has publicly praised the leaders of the WWII-era fascist Slovak state (ref C) and is listed in UPN files as a collaborator with the communist regime, Lehky disagrees with the proposed changes for UPN. Nominated by SNS and known to have participated in at least one commemoration of Slovakia's fascist state, Petrasky supports a revision to the law that gave UPN its mandate. The proposed revision, being drafted by SNS, would require that UPN verify the accuracy of all information contained within historical documents before publishing them. (Comment: Such a provision would have the practical effect of preventing UPN from publishing almost any documents. End Comment.) Petrasky also wants the Institute to focus more on historical research -- to the detriment of preserving and publishing documents, according to Lehky.

¶13. (SBU) Deputy Prime Minister Dusan Caplovic publicly and strongly opposed any change in UPN's procedures. The Ambassador sent a letter of appreciation to Caplovic for his support of this important institution. We will also be taking up the proposed changes directly with Petrasky.

#### CURRENT/FORMER COPS ARRESTED FOR 7-YEAR STRING OF CRIMES

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¶14. (U) Police in Trencin and Banska Bystrica have identified a gang of six former and current policemen who committed a string of kidnappings, burglaries, and other crimes from 1999-2005. The group's criminal activities were uncovered during the investigation of the murder of a businessman, which several elite police officers allegedly committed last November.

VALLEE